

# The business case for flexible and family-friendly working



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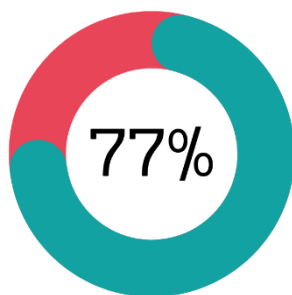
Creating a truly family-friendly workplace is no longer just a moral or ethical decision - it's imperative to the success of a business. Employers who adopt flexible and family-friendly working practices see tangible benefits in productivity, retention, diversity, and overall workforce wellbeing.

This document outlines the key business benefits of flexible and family-friendly working, supported by the latest data and employer insights. Whether you're looking to attract top talent, improve employee engagement, or reduce costs, implementing these policies can drive long-term success for your organisation.

## Return on investment

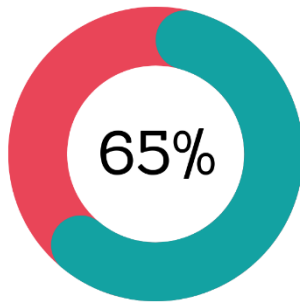
- A trial in 2022 found that offering flexibility for frontline staff results in a positive return on investment within three years, primarily due to reduced absence rates and staff turnover.<sup>i</sup>

## Productivity and performance



Three-quarters (77%) of line managers say flexible working increases productivity.<sup>ii</sup>

## Diversity, equity and inclusion



Two-thirds (65%) of managers see flexibility as a tool for better equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.<sup>iii</sup>

- Over half of employers in Scotland said that flexibility had enabled them to build a more diverse workforce.<sup>iv</sup>

## Gender pay gap

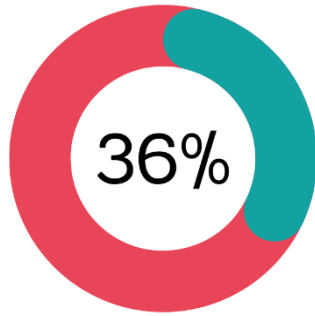
- Analysis across OECD countries has shown that offering fathers more than six weeks of paid paternity leave reduces the gender pay gap by 4%.<sup>v</sup>

## Recruitment and retention



9 in 10 managers (91%) say that advertising jobs with flexibility makes them more attractive.<sup>vi</sup>

- 69% of working parents consider jobs advertised with flexibility to be more desirable.<sup>vii</sup>
- Over half (54%) of organisations struggling with recruitment have introduced more flexible job adverts in order to address these challenges.<sup>viii</sup>
- Research by Deloitte found that nine out of ten (87%) working parents say family leave is a major factor when choosing an employer.<sup>ix</sup>
- Flexibility encourages loyalty and reduces turnover:



Over a third (36%) of employers who participated in Working Families Benchmark survey 2024 reported lower staff turnover as a benefit of flexibility.<sup>x</sup>

- Just under three quarters (73%) of flexible workers in Scotland would like to stay with their employer, compared to just over half (58%) of staff not working flexibly.<sup>xi</sup>

## Wellbeing



Over a third (39%) of employees said flexibility reduces stress and improves their mental health.<sup>xii</sup>

- Longer paternity leave is associated with higher wellbeing for both mothers and fathers.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Absence and sickness

- Flexible working reduces sickness absence rates: a study by Unison found that sickness rates reduced from 12% to 2% when employees started working flexibly.<sup>xiv</sup>

## Cost savings

- 54% of employers participating in the Working Families Benchmark 2024 reported reduced business travel costs due to flexible working.<sup>xv</sup>
- 51% of employers saw lower building expenses, such as office space and utility costs.



Reduced business  
travel costs

54%



Reduced building  
expenses

51%

The evidence is clear: flexible and family-friendly working is not just good for employees—it's a strategic advantage for businesses.

Employers that embed these policies attract talent, increase productivity, improve retention, and reduce costs, all while supporting a healthier, more inclusive workplace. Employers who proactively implement flexible working will not only future-proof their workforce but also position themselves as leaders in the movement towards better workplaces for all.

For more information on implementing family-friendly policies, visit:



[workingfamilies.org.uk](https://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)



[company/working-families](https://www.linkedin.com/company/working-families)

<sup>i</sup> Timewise (2022), <https://timewise.co.uk/article/reaching-a-positive-financial-return-on-investment-in-flexible-working/>

<sup>ii</sup> Sarah Forbes, Holly Birkett, Lowri Evans and Heejung Chung (2022),

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2023/managers-believe-flexible-working-can-boost-productivity>

<sup>iii</sup> Forbes et al, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2023/managers-believe-flexible-working-can-boost-productivity>

<sup>iv</sup> Flexibility Works (2024), <https://www.flexibilityworks.org/flexible-working-research/flex-for-life-report-2024/>

<sup>v</sup> Centre for Progressive Policy (2023), [https://www.progressive-policy.net/publications/leave-in-the-lurch#\\_edn1](https://www.progressive-policy.net/publications/leave-in-the-lurch#_edn1)

<sup>vi</sup> Forbes et al, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2023/managers-believe-flexible-working-can-boost-productivity>

<sup>vii</sup> Working Families, <https://workingfamilies.org.uk/publications/flextheuk2021/>

<sup>viii</sup> CIPD (2022), [https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/resourcing-and-talent-planning-report-2022-1\\_tcm18-111500.pdf](https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/resourcing-and-talent-planning-report-2022-1_tcm18-111500.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> Deloitte (2024), [Deloitte UK equalises paid parenting leave | Deloitte UK](https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/insights/industry/parenting-leave/deloitte-uk-equalises-paid-parenting-leave)

<sup>x</sup> Working Families, <https://workingfamilies.org.uk/publications/benchmark-report-2024/>

<sup>xi</sup> Flexibility Works (2024), <https://www.flexibilityworks.org/flexible-working-research/flex-for-life-report-2024/>

<sup>xii</sup> Wildgoose (2020), <https://wearewildgoose.com/uk/news/flexible-working-survey-insights/>

<sup>xiii</sup> Philpott, Lloyd Frank, John Goodwin, and Mohamad M. Saab. "Paternal leave and fathers' mental health: a rapid literature review." *International Journal of Men's Social and Community Health* 5.SP1 (2022): 29-49; <https://utppublishing.com/doi/pdf/10.22374/ijmsch.v5iSP1.72> Redshaw, Maggie, and Jane Henderson. "Fathers' engagement in pregnancy and childbirth: evidence from a national survey." *BMC pregnancy and childbirth* 13 (2013): 1-15. <https://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2393-13-70>

<sup>xiv</sup> UNISON (2014), <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/09/On-line-Catalogue225422.pdf>

<sup>xv</sup> Working Families, <https://workingfamilies.org.uk/publications/benchmark-report-2024/>